India

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NOTES AND NEWS.

THE dominant note in the Indian Financial Statement made last Monday in the Viceroy's Council ought to have been Exchange, as it has so often been before during Sir James Westland's tenure of office. But it was not. When Exchange was a burden it was the excuse for increasing expenditure and fresh taxation; now that Exchange is a bonus we hear hardly anything of it. Let us take a general survey of Indian finance during the last five years, beginning with 1894-5. And first as to the position to-day. The Budget Estimate for 1898-9 was as follows:—

Revenue	Rx. 99,085,000
Expenditure	98,194,000
Surplus	Rx. 891,000

But the year just closing has been an exceedingly "prosperous" one for the Indian treasury. The revenue has exceeded the estimate by Rx. 2,180,000 (to which railways contribute Rx. 850,000), while expenditure has been less than the estimate by Rx. 1,690,000 net (made up of savings on Exchange, Rx. 1,070,000; on warlike operations, Rx. 430,000; and on general expenditure of Rx. 520,000, with an increase of Rx. 330,000 due to plague). The figures therefore for the Revised Estimate for 1898-99 are:—

Revenue	Rx. 101,265,000
Expenditure	96,504,000
Surplus	Rx. 4,761,000

Of this surplus Sir James Westland has at once distributed Rx. 700,000 in the form of grants-in-aid to the Provincial Governments, leaving in the hands of the Imperial Government a surplus of Rx. 4,061,000, which will doubtless be found to be well under the mark when the accounts of the year are finally closed.

The prospects for 1899-1900 are quite as favourable. Sir James Westland's Budget Estimate is a very conservative affair; indeed it clearly points to a desire to under-estimate the surplus for some reasons of policy into which we shall enquire presently. In the first place under the principal heads of revenue—except opium, which is almost at its point of lowest productiveness—he estimates for smaller receipts in the coming year; and in the next place breaking through the usual practice of taking the rate of Exchange at the realised rate for the year last past (which was close upon 1s. 4d. the rupee—the exact figure we believe was something like 1s. 3.98d.) he has estimated it at 1s. 3¾d., or ¼d. per rupee lower. This over-estimate of the cost of Exchange is made in breach of former practice, in spite of the fact that "1s. 4d. may reasonably be anticipated." It means that the cost of remitting every pound sterling to England has been estimated at 4d. more than it is expected to be—or on a remittance of £16,500,000 for Home charges, a total sum of over Rx. 250,000. What we specially wish to know in this connexion is whether this estimate will influence the official rate of Exchange to be fixed for certain financial transactions of the Government of India and whether it will give Government officials rather more exchange compensation allowance than upon the facts of the case they would be entitled to receive. However, in spite of all attempts to keep the estimate down, Sir James Westland confesses to an estimated surplus of Rx. 3,930,000 for the forthcoming year. So that on the two years 1898-99 and 1899-1900 the Anglo-Indian book-keeper will have an aggregate cash surplus of Rx. 8,000,000. In all probability, if no unforeseen expenditure is incurred, and Exchange remains steady, the Revised Estimate next March will show a considerable increase in this figure. But it is enough for the present. Here is a surplus of four millions a year. What does the Finance Minister propose to do with it?

We quote from Sir J. Westland's Budget statement:—

> In view of the surpluses as shown in the Revised and Budget estimates, the Government have carefully considered the question of remissions of existing taxation. The conclusion they have come to is that any such proposal would be premature, mainly on two grounds. First, we have to make up for the arrears we have had in the past two years, which produced deficits aggregating Rx. 7,064,233. . . . The second and weightier reason is that we have in contemplation . . . . important measures of currency reform.

The first plea is, we think, rather disingenuous. The only way to "make up for the arrears" of the famine years is to repay the debt created to meet the deficits caused by famine. But no such proposals are made. Indeed they are unnecessary. The creation of debt to meet a disaster like famine is legitimate, and the increase of debt was foreseen and repaid by anticipation, as it were, under the scheme for a Famine Insurance Fund. Although the Government have not acted up to their original professions, the appropriations to the Fund during the last 15 years have more than counterbalanced the recent expenditure on famine. The second plea—the "weightier reason"—is audacious. "We consider that we should act unwisely," Sir J. Westland says, "if we were to reduce our financial strength by remitting existing taxation" on the eve of currency experiments. But who wants their currency experiments? In any case there are prior claims on any present surplus. If the Government of India want to reform the currency, and if it is to be an expensive reform (as it is certain to be) money should be raised for that specific purpose, money for which they must go to the British Parliament, explaining and justifying their proposals. They have no right to appropriate for this purpose, and in order to avoid opposition to their schemes, the product of taxation imposed to meet special circumstances which have ceased to exist.

Let us first note this fact: the present surplus is the product of Exchange. We may assume that Revenue and Expenditure have again become normal with the removal of the strain from war, pestilence, and famine to which they have lately been subjected. We may, therefore, fairly compare the financial position to-day with what it was before the days of Chitral, the Tirah campaign, and the great famine. Let us go back, then, to the days of 1894-5. In 1893-4 the Customs Duties produced Rx. 1,600,000; to-day they bring in Rx. 4,600,000—an addition to taxation of Rx. 3,000,000. Why were these additional duties imposed in March and December 1894? For one reason alone, as Mr. Westland (as he then was) almost tearfully urged—to meet the deficits caused by the low Exchange. Observe, then, this comparison:—

In 1894-5 Exchange under all heads cost the Indian Treasury	Rx. 14,600,000
In 1898-9 Exchange under all heads has cost the Indian Treasury ..	Rx. 9,350,000
Gain to the Treasury	Rx. 5,250,000

There is the Government's surplus and a little more. Of course general revenue has increased during the five years; so has, and much more of course, general expenditure. But the fact remains that the surplus of four millions is made up of money set free by a rise in Exchange, which money was collected from the taxpayers to meet an earlier fall in Exchange.

Could there be a plainer and more imperative case for remission of taxation? The sole justification and the only cause of increased taxation in 1894 was, we were told till we were tired of hearing it, the terrible burden of Exchange. Now that the burden has been lightened by nearly double the product of the taxes then imposed (as witnessed by a persistent surplus of larger amount than those taxes produced), what justification remains to the Government for continuing the present high and exceptional level of taxation? The answer offered is: Possible experiments with the currency. The thing is monstrous. The Government of India thus show themselves faithless. They broke faith with the taxpayers over the Famine Insurance Fund; they broke faith with the frontier tribes over Chitral; and now they are practically breaking faith with the taxpayers again. These figures tell a plain tale:—

New taxes imposed to meet Exchange in 1894-5	Rx. 3,000,000
Improvement in Exchange as compared with 1894-5	Rx. 5,250,000
Annual Surplus 1898-9 and 1899-1900	Rx. 4,000,000

Were the additional customs duties in 1894 imposed on false pretences? Is not every remission of taxation a strengthening and not a weakening of a Government's financial position? Is the salt-tax to remain indefinitely at war level, or is the often expressed desire of the Indian Government to revert to a duty of Rs. 2 a maund mere hypocrisy? When does remission of taxation become possible if not with an annual surplus of four millions? Have not the people waited long enough? "Currency Reform" indeed!

As to what could and should be done if the Government were sincere in their numerous protestations, it is not difficult to indicate. With proper economy the surplus in March, 1900, will certainly be nearer Rx. 5,000,000 than Rx. 4,000,000, and may possibly reach Rx. 6,000,000. It is an old trick to manufacture surprise surpluses by under-estimating revenue. With the actual surplus of over four millions for 1898-99 in hand (which is quite enough for the Indian Government to play with, quite enough encouragement and invitation to some fresh expenditure) the Government might have safely taken 8 annas a maund off the salt-tax, and have reduced the Customs duties to 2½ per cent. *ad valorem* in those cases where they are at present 5 per cent. (in the case of cottons 3½ per cent.). Reduction of duty is invariably followed by increased consumption, and these remissions would probably not have cost the Treasury more than Rx. 1,750,000 in the case of salt, and about Rx. 1,250,000 to Rx. 1,750,000 in the case of the Customs—say a total loss of revenue of Rx. 3,000,000 to Rx. 3,500,000. This reduction would have left to the Government a quite sufficient surplus in hand with an under-estimated and expanding revenue. Under these happy circumstances they might have given the people an instalment of that urgent reform—far more urgent and important than currency tinkering—the separation of Judicial and Executive functions, which has hitherto been shirked on the ground (more or less false) of expense. But one begins to despair of the Government of India—in days of deficit, tax-gathering and spendthrift; in days of surplus strangely economical and miserly; hoarding the taxpayers' money for some wild-cat scheme of currency "reform," which, while it may interest and profit them as a governing caste, will probably be opposed to the interests as it will certainly be counter to the opinions of the people they rule.

Surprise has been felt in some quarters at the amount of Indian support which the Sugar Duty Bill has obtained. The English Free Trader has long believed that Protection in all its forms is logically dead and has not a leg of argument to stand upon, and that the tariffs still maintained by foreign States are monuments of human folly. This may be so, but it scarcely gives an accurate view of the present state of the controversy. On one point indeed—and that a most important one—the Free Traders have gained a complete victory. Protection in any form is an expensive luxury, and means the enrichment of particular classes at the expense of the whole community. No one doubts that the Indian consumer will have to pay more for his sugar under the new Act. But in practice this does not quite decide the question. Men are sometimes inclined to indulge even in expensive luxuries. The arguments in favour of Protection that are still alive are three, which of course appeal with very different force to different minds. First, it is argued that for national safety every nation should be able to supply its own needs in time of war, and that therefore it is desirable even when the country is at peace to keep alive some germs of every important manufacturing industry. Secondly, it is insisted that for full national life a variety of occupations is necessary, and that where almost the whole people are dependent on one industry there are found stagnation in prosperity and disaster in adversity. Thirdly, some leading American economists, whose views have been brought before the British public in Mr. and Mrs. Webb's "Industrial Democracy," point out that while Free Trade tends to the survival of the economically fittest, that "economic fitness" may be due either to superior skill and natural advantages or to lower wages and greater degradation of labour—in other words, that Free Trade specially fosters and directs the resources of the nation to the best and worst trades to the neglect of the intermediate ones. Whether these views have any soundness in them, it is certain that they have still great power over many minds.

It is, we think, the second of these arguments that appeals to the Indians as it does to the Irish. They see many of the old manufactures of their country ruined, and their people more and more dependent on the one industry of agriculture. They thus see the variety that was once the charm and stimulus of rural life disappearing and the whole population bound to look for their subsistence from the land, while what they now have to pay the foreigner instead of their own countrymen for manufactured goods, though it may be less in amount, goes to swell that foreign tribute which is so terrible an economic drain on the country. They also perceive that technical education, improvement of communication and other methods of developing the natural aptitudes of the nation, are equally favours to particular classes at the national expense. Why then, they ask, if it be allowable to develop natural advantages, is it not allowable to prevent those natural advantages being rendered useless by the creation of artificial advantages in bounty-giving nations? This may be foolish reasoning, but it is prevalent in most countries where the people have been forced back on the one industry of agriculture as they have been alike in Ireland and in India.

Those who remember what a large part was played both in Irish and American history by non-importation agreements will see with interest that a similar movement is slowly spreading in India. James Mill said in his History of India that the mills of Manchester and Paisley "were created by the sacrifice of the Indian manufacturers," and the same policy has been persisted in down to the present day. It was, however, the lessening of the cotton duty and the imposition of an excise by the Indian Government a few years ago, in obedience to orders from England, that led to the initiation of the Sawdeshi movement. According to the Lucknow *Advocate* this has two objects, (1) the establishment of factories for the manufacture of articles now imported, and of shops for the sale of Native productions, and (2) the use of articles already produced in India. In both the *Advocate* considers the progress made to be on the whole satisfactory.

The *Investors' Review* has long been known as a firm and enlightened friend of India, and therefore anything that it may say on Indian finance is worthy of the closest attention. In its issue of March 17, it criticises an article on the Indian debt which appeared in our columns, and gives its reasons for opposing a guarantee. We stated that the refusal of a guarantee arose from a desire to preserve the imaginary independence of the Anglo-Indian Government and to hide the burdens which are imposed by Imperial expansion; and our contemporary raises the objection that it has opposed a guarantee for very different reasons. But in our article we set out to consider—not all the arguments that have been brought against that measure, but only those "arguments by which the plan has been hitherto met and defeated," and we cannot look upon the views of professed opponents of the present system in India who distrust a guarantee because it will, as they think, give a new life to that system, as having seriously influenced the Government

against it. It is, however, all the more incumbent on those who are also opponents of the present system in India to consider carefully the weighty reasons against the measure put forward by the *Investors' Review*.

It is asserted that (1) every shilling would still have to be paid by India as long as money could be got from it. But that is the case now. (2) If the rupee debt were guaranteed, its interest would have to be paid by India in London at a rate of exchange fixed disadvantageously to India. This is a serious argument against a guarantee; but is it a necessary and inevitable part of the scheme? (3) That it would enable ambitious Imperialists to raise any number of additional millions in this country. Now any scheme which would increase the drain on India should be at once condemned. But would a guarantee of the debt do so? At present under the virtual guarantee India can practically borrow largely, though at a higher interest than under an explicit guarantee, while no outside authority can interfere. Under an explicit guarantee not only would the money be obtained cheaper, but the consent of Parliament would have to be obtained before a penny could be borrowed; and whatever might be the case for the moment, it can hardly be doubted that as the true financial position of India became better known, Parliament would be loth to sanction new loans. In one point, indeed, we are at one with the *Investors' Review* in this matter. It would no doubt be better for the Home Government to repudiate that virtual guarantee which is shown by the price of India stock to be so generally believed in. They would thus put an end practically to Indian borrowings, and at the price of bringing about a grand crash they would relieve India of the present financial system. But as this seems impossible, as the guarantee exists and works, enabling the Indian Government to go on borrowing, we are of opinion that it had better be made explicit so that the borrowing may be done as cheaply as possible and under Parliamentary control.

Last week we were able to announce that the British Indian Association and its organ the *Hindoo Patriot*, had definitely joined the opposition to the Calcutta Municipal Bill. This week a much more formidable opponent comes forward—the *Times of India*, in the past the most faithful supporter of the Government among the Anglo-Indian papers. Reviewing the pamphlet which Mr. A. J. Hughes, Chief Engineer of the Calcutta municipality, has lately issued, our contemporary says:—

Mr. Hughes is strongly opposed to the centralisation in the hands of one small General Committee—of whose twelve members one-third only are to be elected by the Corporation—of practically the entire control of civic administration. He argues, and we think justly, that the abrogation of the elective principle has been carried too far.

This is all the more notable as the *Times of India* is apparently much struck by the difference in the death-rate between 32 in Calcutta and 18 in some English towns, and does not stop to enquire whether the rate was more satisfactory in Calcutta before the elective system was introduced or whether it can be reasonably expected to be as low in India as in England. The *Times of India* thinks that the true way out of the difficulty is not to be found in abrogating the elective principle, but in reorganising the Sanitary Board in each Province so that it may perform the same work of guidance and control as that which the Local Government Board performs for freely elected bodies in England. That is what Mr. Robinson Souttar suggested.

Few who heard Lord Curzon's complacent reply to the Trades Association, and his reference to the Order of 1883, by which in purchases for the local Governments preference was to be given to Indian manufactures, could have suspected the real state of the case. Sir William Wedderburn's questions in the House, and a letter which appeared in the *Statesman* from an Anglo-Indian, will perhaps have tended to open the eyes of the public. It appears that, as Lord Curzon proudly reminded his hearers, certain firms have been chosen in June of last year and since to tender for iron and steel articles manufactured in India. But it somewhat moderates the gratitude that might be felt for this concession when it is found that only seventeen firms were permitted to tender, and that of these *not one* was a Native firm. The *Tribune* naturally asks whether that supposed dislike of trade and handicraft which it is becoming the custom to impute to educated Indians, and the existence of which it denies, is not rather owing to the curious way in which Government encourages Native industry, than to any false pride or distaste for business on the part of the people of the country.

The magnificent fabric of justice in the Indian Empire, with its head of gold and its feet of clay, with its just and learned magistrates so far above the people, and its corrupt police who are so closely in contact and so constantly in evidence in all the affairs of life, is for ever evoking protests even from those who are the Empire's sworn defenders. Thus the *Times of India* draws attention to the gross injustice practised by means of extorted confessions. In India the onus of proving that a confession has been extorted is placed on the prisoner, and a confession even though withdrawn is admitted as evidence against him. Our Anglo-Indian contemporary continues:

It ought to be perfectly plain to every officer of experience that lower class Natives, with the prospect of remaining in police custody for six weeks, would confess anything rather than accept the consequences unfortunately too well known of recalcitrancy. All that the police need say is, "We know you committed this offence, and the best thing you can do is to confess it. If you do not———." A hint of that kind is quite enough. The prisoner sees the danger in which he stands, and is only too eager to confess before he is made to suffer.

It is also to be noted that these confessions are always more numerous in difficult cases than in simple ones—are in fact the refuge of police officers who have failed to find evidence sufficient for conviction.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* is responsible for a story which is a curious commentary on Lord Onslow's recent answer to Lord Stanley of Alderley. At Kamptee, in the Central Provinces, Private Joyce of the Buffs, with two of his comrades, came into collision with some Indians. No great damage seems to have resulted on either side; but when the fray was over, Joyce betook himself to his quarters in the barracks, armed himself with a razor, and coming out again took up a position on a frequented pathway. He cut at every "native" who came within reach, and four in succession were seriously wounded. Joyce, who was arrested with some difficulty, will be handed over to the civil authorities to be tried for causing grievous hurt.

The *Hitabadi* gives an account of a serious shooting case which has occurred in Kachar, Assam. It seems that there has been for some time a dispute as to the ownership of a piece of land between some Mahometan villagers and Mr. J. N. Ross, manager of the Mohanpur tea garden. Matters were at last brought to a crisis by the villagers cutting down and carrying away some bamboo that grew on the disputed territory. The manager thereupon, with pistol ready and accompanied by coolies, arrested two of the offenders. Their comrades naturally protested, pointing out that the title to the land being in dispute it was for the law to decide whether they had offended or not; and that for one of the claimants to arrest two of the opposing party was, to say the least, a high-handed action. To this Mr. Ross paid no attention, and on the villagers attempting to release his prisoners he shot one man, Osman Ali, dead, while another, Abdul Gafoor, was so seriously wounded that he now lies in hospital. Mr. Ross insists that he fired in self-defence. He has been arrested and released on bail.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* returns to the question of the employment of highly paid European officials, usually retired civilians in the Native States and Zemindaries, thus cutting off the one avenue to high office left to the Indians. To take the case of the Cooch Behar State, Mr. D. R. Lyall, who was thrust on the Mahárájá as superintendent, retires in April; and it is said that the Prince is looking for another retired civilian to succeed him, although the real work has been done by Indian subordinates. "Mr. Lyall is a highly honourable and conscientious man, and he was often heard to say that he had no right to take such a large sum from Cooch Behar as pay when he had so little work to do there." It is excellent for the *Western Mercury* to say: "The future development of India depends on the inauguration of a new policy of never employing a European where an Indian can do just as well." But this ideal is still very far from realisation. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* has still to complain that Liberal papers like the *Indian Daily News* "do not see the injustice and meanness of ostracising the educated Indians even from native India."

THE IRRESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

WHATEVER may be the character and effects of the Sugar Act, whether it results in the salvation of a declining industry or only in harassing the consumer, whether it inaugurates a change of fiscal policy throughout the Empire or is destined to a brief and inglorious career in India, its history has already been rich in indications of one peculiarity of our government of that country—its entire irresponsibility. The merits or demerits of the Act are discussed on the next page, but the absence of control with which certain eminent officials carry on the government of a vast and alien empire is so unique a phenomenon that it deserves something more than a passing notice. The subjects of the Tsar submit, no doubt, to a rule as autocratic, but it is a rule exercised by their own countrymen, hallowed and restrained by old traditions and carried on in accordance with principles which have long been accepted in their country as natural and fundamental. The peculiarity of our rule in India is that there the rulers are strangers in the land they rule, and have sprung from a people amongst whom the responsibility of all holders of office has long been an accepted axiom of government. Too proud and powerful to bend to the wishes of their subjects, they have succeeded in eluding the control of the British Parliament. In place of the numerous checks which were brought to bear against the Company, the House of Commons finds itself unable seriously to discuss, much less effectively to interfere in, the affairs of India. All this has been well brought out in the questions on the Sugar Bill which have been addressed to Lord George Hamilton. Thus, in his answers on Monday to Mr. Roberts and on Friday to Sir Henry Fowler, he gave a more or less clear account of the way in which Indian projects of legislation are passed into law; but the public at large seem hardly to realise how small is the power of controlling it which exists in this country outside the India Office. When a Bill has passed through its final stage in the Legislative Council, the Viceroy can either reserve it, in which case assent rests with the Secretary of State at home, or he can assent to it. If he assents to it, the measure at once becomes law without the Crown having ever assented to it, and before it has even been transmitted to England. Thus the Sugar Bill became law on Monday last. The sole power then remaining to the Secretary of State for India is to disallow the Act, in which case it ceases to be law. If the Secretary of State intends to let the Act be, it is his practice to inform the Indian Government to that effect; and his questioners have succeeded in inducing Lord George Hamilton to withhold this information till the Act has been discussed. But it will be seen how idle is the talk about withholding the Royal assent. Save in the case of Bills reserved by the Viceroy, no Royal assent is required. The Bills become law without it, and the only weapon that remains is the negative one of disallowing an Act already in operation. Even this weapon, if the utmost vigilance be not used, is commonly rendered of no avail, because the Secretary of State informs the Indian Government, before the Act has been discussed or perhaps noticed in this country, that it is not his intention to disallow it.

It is obvious that all this is excellently well suited to baulk discussion in the House of Commons. While the business is still before the Legislative Council, to discuss it would be (so Parliament is assured) to interfere with the free judgment of that august body. When it has passed the Council, it is still necessary to wait till papers and explanations have reached this country. By the time that the papers have arrived, the Viceroy has already given his assent, the Act is in operation, the policy is an accomplished fact. Even if, as in the case of the Sugar Bill, the Secretary of State has not barred the veto of the Crown by giving notice that he does not intend to disallow the measure—that is if owing to some unusual amount of watchfulness it can still be disallowed—its opponents are in the worst possible position. The Act is already being enforced. Interests have already grown up under it. Those who attack it are no longer fighting against an innovation; they are trying to abrogate a law which is being enforced by the Courts, and which has, perhaps, already become part of the fiscal system of the country. Thus even in those rare cases where the inaction of the Secretary of State has left the House of Commons a chance of interfering, the attempt has to be made under the worst possible conditions. English critics have to assail not only official prestige but accomplished fact, and they cannot oppose the most revolutionary proposals till those proposals have become the law of the land.

Even this smallest extent of power in the House of Commons presupposes the indifference or neutrality of the Secretary of State. If he be the advocate or the inspirer of the Act under consideration, then indeed is all hope that the House of Commons may influence Indian legislation vain; for the Secretary of State for India is not as other Secretaries of State. His salary is not voted by the House and therefore the customary opportunity of discussing his conduct is wanting. It would, indeed, be possible for his opponents, if they could extort a day from the Government, to move a vote of no confidence in him; but such a motion could not be carried without involving the Ministry itself in his ruin, and if the House had lost confidence in the Ministry, they would find more direct ways of showing it than in a motion dealing with the affairs of India. Thus on every side the position of the Secretary of State is almost impregnable. United, he and the Government of India can defy the House of Commons, and can practically even stifle discussion there. But on a subject so remote as India still is from the ordinary elector, to stifle discussion in the House of Commons is to escape the notice of the country; and thus the Secretary of State for India and the Indian Government escape responsibility to either the British Parliament or people. But still less can they be considered responsible to the people of India, where silence is taken as assent, and criticism as sedition, where violent protest is made the excuse for violent repression, and where opponents who confine themselves to speech and writing are asked how they can pose as representatives of the "dumb millions." Among the majority of Indian officials it is an article of faith that they know better what India requires than do the Indians themselves, and where that belief prevails it is absurd to talk of the rulers being responsible to the ruled.

But if this want of responsibility is seen even in the case of the Sugar Bill, if the House of Commons finds it difficult to discuss a matter which involves a reversal of the fiscal policy of England, and may by reflex action affect the tariff in the uttermost parts of the Empire, what must it be in those cases where India alone is affected? Such a case will occur to the mind of all those who read the able speech that Mr. Bonnerjee delivered at Croydon in October last. The Sedition Bill (as it is usual to term the two measures in question) was far more vital to India than the imposition of countervailing duties on bounty-fed sugar; but it directly concerned India only. In the case of the Sedition Bill Lord George Hamilton asserted that the power of disallowing it "rested with the Crown, and that he was in no sense inclined to shirk responsibility for any advice that he might give her Majesty on that subject"; but he deprecated discussion while the measure was under the consideration of the Legislative Council. We now know that Lord George Hamilton, who thus declared himself solely responsible for allowing or disallowing the measure, was himself the originator of the Bill, had forced it on an unwilling Viceroy, and hurried it through a doubtful Council. With some amendments the Bill was Lord George Hamilton's Bill, and when he said that he was responsible for the advice he should give, he meant that he was responsible for not advising the Crown to strangle his own offspring. But to whom was Lord George Hamilton responsible? To the House of Commons, where discussion was deprecated till the measure had become law? To the Indian Viceroy and Council who had accepted the measure with so bad a grace? To the Indian people who were not suffered to have a voice in the matter? Lord George Hamilton initiated this repressive legislation, he hurried it through the Legislative Council, he tried to stifle discussion in Parliament, and he ignored expressions of opinion in India; and then he talked about being responsible for the advice he gave as to allowing or disallowing his own Act. Again the question must be put: To whom was he responsible? The only possible answer is that he was responsible to nobody, that every stage in the Bill's progress, from the first inception in the India Office here to the final decision not to use the veto of the Crown, was the irresponsible decision of the Secretary of State, his advisers and subordinates, and that we have erected in the heart of the British

Empire an irresponsible authority which is alien alike to all the political traditions of the nation and all the accepted canons of good government.

A LAPSE INTO PROTECTION.

THE Indian Sugar Duty Act, which unfortunately appears to be approved to some extent by Indian opinion, has been rushed through the Viceroy's Council in ten days. It was introduced by Sir James Westland on March 10, and passed into law on the 20th. This, to be sure, is quite in keeping with the new system of legislation at Calcutta and Simla. Yet it does seem to onlookers a rather strange thing that the people of India and of England should not be permitted a reasonable interval wherein to become familiar with the facts and to weigh the principles involved. The mass of the people of India, unhappily, are not yet supposed by their rulers to be competent to express any opinion on their own affairs—even on the profound question whether they prefer to pay more or to pay less for their sugar—always excepting the occasions when they seem to jump with the Government. The Government has decided that they prefer dear to cheap sugar, and some of the Indian journals as well as some of the Indian members of the Viceroy's Council appear to assent. But there is conclusive evidence to show that the Bill is not acceptable to the Indian people as a whole. As for English opinion, the Secretary of State has taken good care to muzzle that. He approved of the Bill; how can he disapprove of the Act? Mr. J. M. Maclean, whose knowledge of Indian affairs no one will impugn, was startled when he heard of this Bill, and questioned the Secretary of State. He was duly set down, with a smart snub. Then he wrote to the newspapers. "I call this act of legislation a measure of Protection," he wrote, "because Lord George Hamilton says its object is to protect an indigenous industry against unfair competition." Well, of course it is Protection. "What an unfathomable depth of ignorance it displays of the real economic condition of India!" exclaims Mr. Maclean. Precisely; but the interests of a small section in India seem to have coincided with the convenience of the Government of India, and of the Cabinet at home, so what more is needed? If indeed the people of India deliberately preferred this Bill and were self-governing, then one would simply say they were profoundly mistaken and leave them to learn by experience. But there is no satisfactory evidence to show that such is their deliberate preference; and the English people, whose fixed policy is in direct antagonism to the policy of the new Act, have had no opportunity of pronouncing upon this departure from the principles hitherto applied to England and to India in common. Nay, Mr. Maclean has been shouldered off in his attempt to bring the Bill into public discussion.

There has not reached this country any adequate account of the facts on which the Act is based. Not that the particular facts are altogether necessary: the principle of the measure is enough to condemn it. But for all that one would like to know the facts on which its authors proceeded. We have already cited Reuter's telegram announcing that Sir James Westland had "adduced the strongest proofs that the importation of the bounty-fed article was seriously affecting the Indian producer and had already led to the closing of numerous refineries." These "proofs" are probably the allegations submitted by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, according to the Simla correspondent of the *Times* (Nov. 6), to the effect that "in the district of Jessor a large number of refineries have been closed since the recent heavy imports of beet sugar and the prevalence of low prices." Supposing that were true, one could not call it a conclusive argument for the Bill, except in the mouths of "the Indian producer" and the refiners. But we should like to know something about "the Indian [*i.e.*, Anglo-Indian] producer" and the refiners, and on what grounds they are to be protected at the expense of the consumers. If one turns to the Blue-books on Indian trade, one finds no little difficulty in piecing together anything like an account of the sugar business. One learns incidentally that there are some 3,000,000 acres under sugar, and that there are thirteen large sugar factories in the country; but such vague, scrappy, incidental notes are all that are vouchsafed apart from the figures showing exports and imports. There is nothing in the "Statement exhibiting the Material and Moral Progress and Condition of India" that prepares one for protectionist legislation. If one turns to the "Review and Tables relating to the Trade of British India" for the last five years (1893-94 to 1897-98), one finds this (pp. 9-10):—

The quantity and value of the imports have been in the last five years:—

		Cwts.		Rx.
1893-94	..	2,127,905	..	2,824,190
1894-95	..	2,490,611	..	2,875,297
1895-96	..	2,730,963	..	3,106,813
1896-97	..	2,861,400	..	3,151,829
1897-98	..	4,608,630	..	4,784,479

The increase in the importation of sugar is one of the most noticeable features in the import trade of the year. The quantity imported is 61 per cent. greater than in 1896-97, and the value is higher by Rx. 1,632,650. The first place is still held by Mauritius; but whereas the importation of 1,666,845 cwt. in 1896-97 was 58 per cent. of the whole trade, last year its share was reduced to 38 per cent. with an import of 1,778,016 cwt. There is an increase from all the sources of supply; but the bounty-fed beet sugar from Austria-Hungary and Germany has flooded the market. These countries have been forced to find an outlet for their sugar in the markets of the East by reason of the closing of the United States market by the Dingley tariff which imposed a countervailing duty equal to the export bounty, and the competition of France in the English market due to an enhanced export bounty on French sugar.

This record and comment would have simply suggested that, by the foolishness of these Continental countries, our not too prosperous fellow-subjects in India had come into a good thing, and that the Indian and Mauritian refiners and sugar-growers would have their wits sharpened. There is nothing here to prepare one for special class legislation, at variance with established principle.

The Sugar Duty Act applies mainly to refined sugar. But the consumer of unrefined sugar also will soon begin to feel its effects, for unrefined sugar will naturally tend to rise in sympathy. The total production of coarse or unrefined sugar in India is estimated at 2,500,000 tons, value Rx. 25,000,000. This elementary fact is not, so far as we know, to be found in the Blue-books; but we take it on the authority of a Government circular of October 31, 1898. The circular says "the imports"—that is the imports of 1897-98, namely (as above) 4,608,630 cwts., value Rx. 4,784,479—"bear a considerable proportion, as regards value, to the production of the country." Well, it is a little over 1 to 6. But, more than that, the circular fails to observe that there is a material difference in quality; most of the German sugar being very pure, and worth twice as much as the Indian sugar. And we must regard the quantities also: the total import of foreign sugar refined and unrefined in 1897-98 was only 4,608,630 cwts., or say 230,000 tons—which reduces the proportion to a good deal less than one to ten. This makes the scare appear somewhat excessive. But let us compare the particular imports aimed at, namely those from Germany and Austria. It is useless to trouble about the French imports; for they are given in 1897-98 at only 23,825 cwts., value Rx. 27,365. The Austrian and German imports are in *cwts.*:—

		Austria-Hungary.		Germany.
1893-94	..	11,549	..	189,30
1894-95	..	7,093	..	274,63[illegible]
1895-96	..	4,934	..	718,218
1896-97	..	115,514	..	758,806
1897-98	..	945,787	..	1,203,309

Together they make 2,149,096 cwts., a little over 100,000 tons, or somewhere about $\frac{1}{25}$th of the total Indian production of coarse sugar. This makes the case for the Act several degrees less cogent. But the case is even worse than this; for the Indian production ought to be increased, as well as the total imports diminished, by the amount of importation from Mauritius, the Mauritian coolies being included in the paternal care of the Government of India. Besides, even in the worst year—the single year whose experience has upset the Anglo-Indian refiners and the Indian Government—India exported only one-eighth less than the usual annual export of sugar, which is as nearly as possible one-half the quantity imported; and this was the year that felt the full force of the famine.

One would like to get at the origin of this unfortunate and menacing legislation. We are not going to anticipate that Mr. Chamberlain is at the back of the Indian Government and Lord George Hamilton in the teeth of his well-known exposition of economic doctrine, say in 1881. There are, indeed, subtle critics who profess to connect India with the West Indies in this bitter matter of sugar. But

we prefer to wait for Mr. Chamberlain's spontaneous declaration. The first external public move in the game seems to have been a letter addressed to the Government of India by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, and reported by the Simla correspondent of the *Times* under date November 17. It is pertinent to note that the Chamber, as reported, had in view "the determination of her Majesty's Government to protect the sugar industries of the Empire." Three weeks before this date, on October 31, the Government of India had "no clear evidence before them that the increasing sugar imports have had, or are tending to, such serious consequences." So wrote the Secretary of the Revenue and Agricultural Department in the circular already mentioned. The Chamber accordingly now produced the district of Jessor with the collapse of "a large number of refineries" there (though there seem to be only thirteen large refineries in all India), and doleful vaticinations of the future of "the remaining factories in that district." Apparently, however, the substance of the case had been laid before the British delegates at the Brussels Conference, without effect. Just a week before, on November 10, the *Times* Simla correspondent telegraphed that Government had "asked the local administrations to enquire into the matter, and also to discover whether a falling off of the land revenue or canal dues would probably be consequent on the abandonment of the cultivation of the sugar-cane." It is not obvious how the Austrian and German invasion is within measurable distance of causing "the abandonment of the cultivation of the sugar-cane." Look at it as one may, the Act seems to be an incredibly misguided lapse into exploded fallacies. Is it the first step towards a general revival of Protection?

OUR LONDON LETTER.

(FROM A PARLIAMENTARY CORRESPONDENT.)

LORD GEORGE HAMILTON, though a poor creature, has managed to make himself interesting in a general way in connexion with the Government of India and the countervailing duties. Of course he knows nothing about the matter really, and that makes it all the more grotesque when he tries to score off a man like Mr. Maclean, who knows a great deal about Indian opinion and requirements. I wrote on this subject last week, but there have been further developments since I wrote. On Friday last Mr. Maclean returned to the charge, and it matters not whether a man agrees with the Government's policy or not, it will be equally obvious how completely the incapable Minister at the India Office was cornered. For this is how the subtle Mr. Maclean framed his question:—

I wish to ask whether the noble lord has seen the statement made yesterday by the Under-Secretary for the Colonies with regard to the countervailing duties on West Indian sugar, and whether he has seen the words, assuming the expediency of countervailing duties, that "it was idle to contend that they had yet converted public opinion as a whole to their view, for many who supported the present Government would not accept the principle of countervailing duties. It was no good of them living in a fool's paradise, and that was why he had laid stress on the fact that they could not deal with the question unless they had public opinion entirely behind them." I wish to ask whether, in face of this declaration of the Colonial Office that it bows to public opinion in the matter, the noble lord still intends to persevere with the India Countervailing Duties Bill.

It need not be explained to anyone who knows his House of Commons that though Mr. Maclean calls himself a Tory, he was uproariously cheered by the Liberals as he drew attention to this obvious difference of opinion between the Colonial and the India Offices, and the touch about the "fool's paradise" received particular attention. Lord George apparently felt that he was just the man to reply in connexion with such a locality, and what he said proved it, for he remarked in that weak and highly pitched voice of his that Lord Selborne's remarks had reference solely to the imposition of countervailing duties in England. Then with miraculous ineptitude he went on: "He did not say that public opinion was against the imposition of countervailing duties in this country; all he said was that public opinion as a whole was not yet on that side." There was of course a howl of laughter at this bit of "Lord-George-Hamiltonianism." Then he added that in India the conditions of trade were very different, and that there "public opinion" is unanimous in favour of the countervailing duties.

Mr. Maclean was up in a minute asking if Lord George really assumed that India is to be governed without reference to the public opinion of England, but the Speaker intervened with the remark that the hon. member was trying to raise a debate. "It's so difficult to raise a debate in this House," retorted the undaunted Maclean, for as I explained last week, Sir Howard Vincent had by a blocking motion succeeded for the time in preventing Mr. Maclean from moving the adjournment of the House on this question. But Lord George had not finished with his tormentors, for Mr. Bryn Roberts wanted to know what difference there was between England and India, except that here the consumer is represented in Parliament and in India he is not. Lord George, like Brer Rabbit, "lay low and said nuffin'." And then Sir Wilfrid Lawson put in a searching enquiry, "I beg to ask the noble lord how he arrives at the public opinion of India?" There were shouts of laughter as the badgered Secretary of State looked this way and that, and then up at the glass ceiling, and finally snapped out "Through the recognised channels of public opinion."

This was not the only time the unfortunate noble lord was badgered on this topic at that sitting, for Mr. M'Kenna at another stage during questions asked for information as to the object of the Indian Government in going in for this policy. Lord George read his reply from a carefully written paper in a high staccato tone, which amused not a few and impressed none. "The object is to prevent a vast indigenous trade in India, based on free enterprise and industry, from being undermined by the subsidised products of foreign countries." He looked mightily pleased with himself as he rolled these words out. Then Sir Henry Fowler asked if the Secretary of State would postpone his decision as to allowing or disallowing any Act which might be passed by the Legislative Council in reference to countervailing duties until the papers, including the reports of the debates in the Legislative Council, had been laid on the Table of the House.

The noble lord is always pleased to have an opportunity to deliver a little lecture taught him by the permanent officials in the India Office. Oliver Wendell Holmes's line, "Thou sayst an undisputed thing in such a solemn way," was never more finely illustrated than in the utterances of Lord George; and he really seemed to enjoy himself as he trotted forth the following:—

Perhaps I may be permitted to state what the law is as regards Bills which have passed their final stage through the Indian Legislative Councils. As soon as the Viceroy has given his assent to the Bill it at once comes into legal operation. It is then sent home to the Secretary of State, who can through the Crown intimate at any time afterwards his disapproval of the Act, in which case it ceases to be law. It is the practice, but not legally necessary, for the Secretary of State to officially intimate his intention to leave the Act to its operation. If there be any general disposition to have a discussion on this subject I am quite ready to forego this intimation until after the subject has been discussed.

This sounded wonderfully fair until a question was shot in by a very shrewd observer, for Mr. Courtney asked quietly but with a smile of confidence, "Does the Bill contain within itself any clause fixing a time for it to come into operation?" And upon this the Minister, who was so free in promising the opportunity of discussion, and who had so readily promised to withhold his intimation that the Act could operate at once, replied, "It will come into operation at once—on Monday." By this time any humane opponent of the Secretary for India was beginning to pity him. There is something painful in witnessing the struggles of a hopelessly incompetent man to appear equal to the occasion.

The question is raising all sorts of enquiries over on this side. Mr. M'Kenna, a rising young Radical, is anxious to know whether the Government will take steps to prevent "vast indigenous trades, based on enterprise and industry, from being undermined by the subsidised products of foreign countries" in this country as well as in India. But the Government is not prepared to pronounce plumply and plainly for Protection here—as yet. So Mr. Balfour indulged in his favourite device of the evasive answer by saying that there is no production of indigenous sugar in this country. Perhaps not, but Mr. M'Kenna's question was not about sugar alone. It all turns on the shrewd observation made, in the form of a question already referred to, by Mr. Bryn Roberts—"In this country the consumer is represented; in India he is not." And however much tempted one may be to think lightly of representative institutions, they do make a difference after all.

I do not suppose that the inhabitants of India will take much interest in the details of London government. I don't see why they should, seeing that the average Londoner knows absolutely nothing and cares as little about India. At the same time I feel sure my readers will not be surprised to hear that the Government which approves of the wrecking of the Calcutta municipality is also doing its best to smash the London County Council. That Council was formed by a Tory Bill, but it has never played the Tory game, and that party has from the first repented that the Council was formed. But London loves its Council as was shown at the last election, and so the Government dare not openly propose to abolish it. A more insidious policy is therefore being indulged in, one of "enlightened suicide." It is never safe to prophesy in politics, but while of course the Government will get its Bill through, thanks to its huge majority, I feel sure that the people of London will take their revenge at the first time of asking.

It is really curious how this Government sides with monopolies and vested interests of nearly every sort, and hates and distrusts all popular and representative institutions. What is going on in Calcutta is, as I have already said, reproduced over here. Quite apart from the London Government scheme to which I have alluded there is the vast problem of how to supply London and its millions of inhabitants with pure and plentiful water. On the one hand there are greedy private companies intent on profits; on the other hand the London County Council. I need scarcely say that the Government in every case sides with the companies and against the Council. Indeed the London County Council is in the eyes of the good Tory much the same as the Indian National Congress—something to be thwarted, flouted, sneered at, and misrepresented whenever there is a chance. But both institutions will survive.

CHRONICLE OF THE WEEK.

THURSDAY, March 16.—In the House of Lords the Money-lending Bill was read a second time.

In the House of Commons the consideration of the Navy Estimates was resumed in Committee of Supply.

The Duke of Devonshire, presiding at the annual meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council, said that Unionists could now view the Home Rule demand without any alarm whatever, and its continued existence appeared to him to be a most beneficent and useful incident in their political position. It was a great weight round the necks of their opponents, which they could not shuffle off, and it had a strengthening and vivifying influence on their own party. He did not see anything in Mr. Balfour's declarations on the subject of a Catholic University for Ireland which would justify any Unionist in withdrawing from the party, and he should be extremely surprised if, during the existence of the present Government, any practical measure dealing with that subject was brought forward.

Mr. Rhodes left Berlin, having signed a treaty concerning the construction of a section of the Cape-to-Cairo telegraph line across German East Africa. The negotiations with respect to the construction of the railway were not so far advanced, but the *National-Zeitung* stated that an agreement as to the points of view from which the project was regarded had been effected.

FRIDAY, March 17.—In the House of Commons the army estimates were considered in Committee of Supply.

The result of the polling in North Norfolk was declared. Sir W. B. Gurdon (Liberal) was returned, receiving 4,775 votes, against 3,610 recorded for Sir K. Kemp (Conservative)—a majority of 1,165.

The executive committee of the Ulster Liberal Unionist Association, at a meeting in Belfast, passed a resolution expressing satisfaction with the declaration of the Duke of Devonshire that the Government had no intention of establishing sectarian Universities in Ireland, and recording the opinion that in any scheme for the reform of higher education non-sectarian principles should be strictly adhered to.

Signor Martino officially notified the Tsung-li-Yamên that he had been recalled, and that the British Minister had been officially entrusted with the care of Italian interests pending the arrival of his successor.

The Queen-Regent of Spain signed the ratification of the peace treaty with the United States. A decree was issued dissolving the Cortes and convoking the new Parliament in June.

SATURDAY, March 18.—Mr. J. Dillon, M.P., speaking at a St. Patrick's Day dinner in Manchester, held that the Irish cause dominated British politics, and said the real issue was not the attitude of English parties, but the state of mind of Ireland herself. If the Irish people were united they could win Home Rule; unless they were united they never could.

The Berlin *Post* said, in view of the determination of the Indian Government to impose special duties on bounty-fed sugar, that, as large quantities of German sugar had hitherto been exported to India, the German Government, while continuing to aim at an international settlement of the bounties question, might be compelled to retaliate by no longer extending the most-favoured-nation treatment to Indian products.

A deputation of 500 Finlanders had arrived in St. Petersburg with a monster petition to the Tsar, bearing 563,000 signatures, praying for a declaration of their constitutional rights, which they feared were in danger of being restricted by recent legislation. As, however, the deputation did not, before setting out, obtain the necessary permission of the Governor-General of Finland, the Tsar refused to receive their petition, and they were directed to return to their homes.

MONDAY, March 20.—In the House of Lords, Lord Salisbury made a statement with reference to recent events in Uganda.

In the House of Commons various foreign and colonial matters were discussed in Committee of Supply on a vote on account for the Civil Service and Revenue departments.

At a conference between representatives of the employers' and workers' organisations in the cotton trade, held in Manchester, an understanding was arrived at which averted the threatened strike in this industry. The employers agreed to concede immediately the advance in wages demanded, and the operatives undertook to consider proposals for trying to arrive at some agreement by which wages should be governed by the state of trade.

In the Legislative Council in Calcutta, Sir James Westland made the annual financial statement. Important railway and military memoranda accompanied the statement. The Legislative Council passed the Bill imposing countervailing duties on imported bounty-fed sugar after a brief discussion, in which the principle of the Bill was defended by the Viceroy, Sir J. Westland, and others.

TUESDAY, March 21.—In the House of Commons, on the order for the second reading of the London Government Bill, Mr. H. Gladstone moved an amendment declaring that no Bill dealing with the local government of the metropolis could be satisfactory which, while disturbing the existing system, failed to simplify and complete it, and which, at the same time, rendered more difficult the attainment of the unity of London. The debate was adjourned.

A telegram from Paris stated that a convention was signed this evening by Lord Salisbury and M. Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador in London, delimiting the possessions and spheres of the two Powers in Central Africa. The definite delimitation from the northern frontier of the Belgian Congo to the 16th degree of latitude was to be carried out by a mixed commission, on the general principle that Great Britian retained the Bahr-el-Ghazal and Dar Fur, while France kept Wadai and Bagirmi, and generally the territory to the east and north of Lake Chad. North of the 15th degree of latitude, Great Britain recognised that the French sphere extented south of Tropic of Cancer as far as the western limit of the Libyan Desert. From the Nile to Lake Chad, and between the 5th and 15th parallels, the two Powers mutually conceded equal treatment in commercial matters. This clause will permit France to have commercial establishments on the Nile. Finally, the two Powers mutually undertook to refrain from exercising political and territorial rights outside the frontiers fixed by the convention.

In the German Reichstag, Herr von Bulow, the Foreign Secretary, said with regard to the negotiations with Mr. Rhodes he could not as yet communicate all particulars; but as regarded the laying of telegraphs through the East African Protectorate an agreement had been made with the Trans-African Telegraph Company by which German interests and rights of supremacy had been safeguarded in every respect. The company had received permission to construct the line in question at its own cost through German territory, and it must be completed within five years. It bound itself to erect at its own cost, apart from the through wires required for its own purposes, another separate wire to be used for the telegraph traffic of German East Africa, and to be the property and maintained at the cost of the German Government, which would keep up the company's wires at the cost of the company. At the end of 40 years the German Government could take over the line without compensation of any kind.

WEDNESDAY, March 22.—In the House of Commons a discussion took place upon slavery in Zanzibar. — Mr. Lionel Holland moved the second reading of the Old-Age Pensions Bill.

A Parliamentary paper was issued containing despatches from the Sirdar and Lord Cromer in reference to alleged cruel treatment of the Dervish wounded after the battle of Omdurman, and the destruction of the Mahdi's tomb and the throwing of his bones into the Nile. The destruction of the Mahdi's tomb and the removal of his remains Lord Kitchener ordered as politically advisable; and Lord Cromer expressed his personal opinion that both measures were political necessities.

Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman was the principal guest at a house-dinner of the National Liberal Club. He commented on the fashion in which the Government abandoned proposals and principles to which they had committed themselves from the fear of losing votes. The present, he said, was not a Government at all—it was mere wire-pulling.

THE SUGAR DUTY ACT.

INDIAN OPINION DIVIDED.

STATEMENTS BY MR. MACLEAN.

The *Morning Leader* of Wednesday last printed the following telegram (dated March 21) from its correspondent at Bombay:—

While Native opinion is still somewhat uncertain as to the Sugar Duty Act, among well-informed Indian critics there is only one opinion.

They are against it as being economically unsound, and they regard as extremely doubtful the suggestion that it will benefit Native industry.

As to the statements officially made on behalf of the Bill, these are vigorously combated as unreliable.

The following statement by Mr. J. M. Maclean, M.P., was circulated to the newspapers of Monday last (March 20):—

Lord George Hamilton has triumphed. The English people will wake up to-morrow morning to find, to their infinite amazement, that the law authorising the imposition of countervailing duties in India on sugar imported from Germany, Austria, and France has actually come into operation, and that Protection has, by the authority of the Secretary of State alone, and without the consent of Parliament, been established in India. I call this act of legislation a measure of Protection, because Lord George Hamilton says that its object is to protect an indigenous industry against unfair competition. I could not help smiling, half in pity and half in anger, when I listened to this statement from a man to whom the destinies of 250 millions of human beings have been entrusted for four years. What an unfathomable depth of ignorance it displays of the real economic condition of India. Why, the total importations of refined sugar into India (including that from Mauritius, about 40 per cent. of the whole, which will not, I suppose, be taxed under the new Act) were only 4,600,000 cwt. in the year 1897-98, or about 2 lb. a head for the whole population, against a consumption of 81 lb. a head in the United Kingdom. The natives of India eat enormous quantities of sugar, but it is unrefined sugar grown in the country. India is the indigenous home of the sugar-cane which yields, I believe, four crops a year, and not only is the raw sugar absolutely untouched by the imports of refined sugar, but about one million hundredweights are exported every year, chiefly to the United Kingdom. The pretence, therefore, of the injury done by foreign competition is absurd. The import trade is hardly worth mentioning, and the revenue to be derived from the new tax (£50,000 a year) is not worth the expense and annoyance of creating a new department.

I know it is said that countervailing duties do not mean Protection, but what else do they mean? Lord George Hamilton is a free trader with a "but;" one of the class of people who say, "Oh! you know, of course I am all for free trade, but——," which is as much as if one were to say, "Oh! in a general way I admit that two and two make four, but in certain circumstances I consider that they ought to make five."

The whole argument for and against countervailing duties was fought out 50 years ago in a House of Commons which contained a much larger proportion of experienced men of business of high culture and independent thought than can be found in the Parliaments of this generation. Slavery had been abolished in the English West Indies, and the Protectionists argued, with much plausibility, that differential duties should be imposed to protect our colonies against the competition of slave-grown sugar. But this plea was not listened to, and the import duties were made uniform. The whole case is admirably stated in Disraeli's "Life of Lord George Bentinck," and Disraeli sums it up with the sententious remark, which really sounds prophetic, "Strange that an article of produce which charms infancy and soothes old age should so often be productive of political disaster." *Absit omen!*

I have never been able to make out what are the principles of the present coalition Government; but it was the Conservative Government of 25 years since, containing such men as Disraeli, Salisbury, and Stafford Northcote, which abolished the duty on sugar. The party never had a better Chancellor of the Exchequer than Stafford Northcote, and he not only took off the sugar duty, but reduced the income-tax to 2d. in the pound, which he thought a high enough figure for times of peace. Are the present Government following in his footsteps when they keep the income-tax at 8d. in times of peace, and allow one of their colleagues to check the free sale of sugar in India?

But I do not wish to-day to discuss the question of the sugar duty, as the debate has been postponed indefinitely till those very leisurely statesmen, Lord George Hamilton and Sir Henry Fowler, have had time to prepare their orations on the subject. My own record is clear. Ten years ago I was one of the Conservative members who protested against Baron de Worm's Bill, which was in consequence abandoned, and Mr. W. H. Smith, the leader of the House at that time, thanked me warmly for my intervention.

My object to-day is to point out that a grave constitutional question has arisen which far surpasses in importance even the change made in the Indian tariff. The Secretary of State for India has taken up in Parliament the position that the Government of India has certain independent rights, and that he can sanction and put in operation laws at variance with the established commercial policy of the British Empire. The House of Commons, he maintains, has no right to interfere till afterwards, when it can dismiss him from office if it thinks he has done wrong. Well, even this dread alternative has no terrors for me. But what satisfaction would it be to dismiss a Secretary of State who had run riot for six months while Parliament was not sitting, and thrown the whole Empire into confusion? Anyone who reads Lord Salisbury's masterly constitutional despatch of May 31, 1876, will see in a moment that Lord George Hamilton utterly misconceives his position. Lord Salisbury foresaw the very difficulty which has now arisen, and he deliberately reserved to the Secretary of State the right to initiate changes of tariff, because, he said, these changes might cause great loss to mercantile men if they were not permanent, and disallowance months after the enactment of the law would not abate this mischief. It never occurred to a statesman of Lord Salisbury's calibre that the intervention of the Secretary of State meant anything else than the intervention of the House of Commons, whose servant and agent he is. It would have seemed to him incredible that a Secretary of State for India, and more particularly one of his own subordinates, would arrogate to himself the right to legislate independently for India, on the basis of what he calls "Indian public opinion" alone, as if he were not the mere creature of the House. Yet this is what Lord George Hamilton has done.

I have written to the Speaker calling attention to the fact that the coming into operation to-morrow of the new Act completely changes the situation. Here, if ever there was one, is a definite case of urgent public importance to which attention may be fairly called by a motion for adjournment. It is a question which concerns the dignity and authority of the House of Commons and the right of the English people to control the administration of India.

The following account of an interview with Mr. J. M. Maclean, M.P., appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* of Wednesday last:—

A Conservative member of Parliament is naturally rather slow to be interviewed on a subject on which he is at issue with his own Government. But Mr. Maclean stands in a very peculiar position. Though a man of great knowledge on Indian affairs—for many years the proprietor and editor of the *Bombay Gazette*—he has been muzzled by the Government in his effort to raise the question of the Indian Sugar Duties in the House of Commons. Mr. Balfour's reply to him yesterday on the question of the "blocking motions" was a decided and deliberate rebuff. Wherever he tries to break through the ring fence he is driven back. For the final blow is that he is not only precluded from moving the adjournment, but the Speaker has now informed him that he cannot raise the question on the adjournment of the House over the Easter holidays. Thus silenced in Parliament, he naturally seeks an outlet in the Press; and I found him yesterday afternoon only too anxious to pour out his tale.

The most recent theme for his indignation was Lord Curzon's speech. He held a cutting in his hand, and he pointed out passage after passage in a crescendo of indignation.

"A more indiscreet speech was never uttered by a Viceroy of India," exclaimed Mr. Maclean. "It is worse than Lord Lytton. Hitherto I have said not a word in criticism of Lord Curzon. I thought that it would be ungenerous. I gave him a fair trial. But I said to a Minister a few weeks ago, 'It would be better if he did not talk so much.' And I have proved right. My prophecy is justified.

"Look at this!" cried Mr. Maclean.

> It may be that this Bill will set an example of far-reaching significance. By some it may even be regarded as a factor in the imperial problem.

"That is a threat to us in England—sugar duties are to come to us, *viâ* India and Lord Curzon.

"Then look at this fine rhetorical attack on Free Trade—a doctrine which is held here equally by both parties, and which we have laboriously taught to India:—

> I do not think we need pay much attention, therefore, to the mutterings of the high priests at free trade shrines. Their oracles do not stand precisely at their original premium. This is not a question of economic orthodoxy or heterodoxy.

"And he gives us an elaborate defence of the whole policy of meeting bounties by duties—a defence which is obviously meant for home consumption.

"Lord Curzon," went on Mr. Maclean, "has many admirable qualities; but they are House of Commons qualities. He forgets that rhetoric does not go far in the government of men. He over-estimates for instance the effect of his speech on India. He forgets that any Calcutta Babu or Mahratta Brahmin could make a speech quite as good. The fact is that he has been spoilt. He reminds me of the young Endymion, who tells his father when asked what he is going to do, that he intends to be Prime Minister."

"But are his facts right? He says that Indian opinion is behind him, and that the Indian indigenous trade has been going down. Is he correct?"

"As to the latter point, he takes the returns of a famine year, which is as if you were to take the returns of the South Wales coal trade during the coal strike, and to conclude from that that the coal trade had fallen off. I have not seen the returns he quotes—they have not reached this country. But in regard to refined sugar, I would ask—was it not at a higher price last year, in spite of imported sugar, than before? Lord Curzon quotes opinion at Bombay and Karachi. But even if he correctly states his case, I would point out that both these places are on the seaboard, where the competition of imported

sugar is at its highest. Inland, the rates of carriage would take off all the profits, and refined sugar does not penetrate. So the competition does not affect the Native raw sugar.

"Have you any information as to the real state of Indian public opinion?

"Free opinion in India is at the present moment almost entirely dead. People dare not speak out. The new Press laws act like a gag. I was appalled on my last visit to discover how much freedom had been lost since I last visited India. That is precisely why Parliamentary criticism in this country is so important. It is the only chance of freedom. It acts like a breath of fresh air. But in the general deadness of public opinion the Bombay Chamber of Commerce is one of the freest assemblies in India, and is always regarded as expressing Indian opinion. That chamber has gone against Lord Curzon. It is to this that he refers when he says:—

> There are, it is true, certain interests and certain chambers of commerce at Bombay and Karachi in which these interests are strongly represented, which have not entirely concurred in the necessity for countervailing duties.

"By that Lord Curzon means the strongest chamber of commerce in India."

"Have you any recent news from India?"

"Yes, I have spent £10 of my own money in wiring to India for a reliable opinion, as it is useless to accept the usual telegrams sent by Reuter, who, by the way, have suppressed my name in the Parliamentary telegrams sent to India. This is what my correspondent, a thoroughly impartial man, has wired in return:—'*Pioneer*, *Bombay Gazette*, *Times of India*, approve Bill—Native Press considering—European and Native mercantile opinion hostile—measure unexpected—information inadequate—evil denied—Protection remedy disliked.' So you see that the most important opinion—that of commerce—is hostile to the Bill."

"And what do you propose to do now?"

"If I cannot speak in the House of Commons, I shall not be muzzled in the country. I shall not remain silent. I have all the best opinion on my own side against the Government—not only the Liberal Unionists except Mr. Chamberlain, but also a great number of the Conservatives, especially men like Mr. Ascroft, Mr. Whiteley, and other representatives of the great towns. The boroughs who returned Conservatives at the last election did not vote for Protection. The Government little know what they are doing. They will soon know that they are entering on a dangerous path. They cannot keep the House of Commons silent for ever, and it will speak when it is too late. They will have to repeal the law, and that is as bad for India as anything, as Lord Salisbury himself pointed out in the masterly dispatch of May 31, 1876. There he asserted, once and for all, the control of Parliament before the event over Indian finance. It is on that dispatch that I take my stand."

"And Lord Curzon?"

"Lord Curzon will have to learn to hold his tongue. These allocutions *urbi et orbi* must cease. He will have to stop lecturing and hectoring the British House of Commons, and denouncing the recognised finance of the British Empire. The Imperial Government will do well to tell Lord Curzon to mind his own business."

And with that the Member for Cardiff went his way—sombre, determined, indignant. It is not a wise thing for a Government to incur such anger lightly.

INDIAN PETITIONS TO PARLIAMENT.

AN EXPLANATION TO SAVE DISAPPOINTMENT.

There is obviously a widespread misapprehension in India as to the utility of addressing to the House of Commons petitions relating to purely individual grievances. Such petitions, prepared at great expense of trouble and money, are frequently received by members of Parliament and by the British Committee of the Indian National Congress together with requests that they may be presented to the House of Commons. The petitions are duly presented; but in order to prevent disappointment, and to discourage a practice which involves much expense to petitioners and can lead to no substantial results, it seems desirable to explain clearly the non-existence of any Parliamentary machinery for enquiry into the grievances of petitioners, to say nothing of the redress of such grievances.

Petitions to Parliament fall roughly into two classes. There are (1) numerously signed petitions relating to public grievances of manifest importance. Petitions of this kind, being mentioned in the newspapers and recorded in the Reports of the Select Committee on Public Petitions, exercise a valuable influence upon public opinion. They are evidence of the existence of a particular opinion among a large community of persons, and they are therefore material of a serviceable kind for speakers who, whether in the House of Commons or elsewhere, deal with the questions concerned. It is possible indeed to request that such petitions may be read out in the House of Commons by the clerk at the Table, and it may be said generally that the importance of public petitions, numerously signed, cannot easily be exaggerated. In fact, without such petitions it is very difficult to persuade the House of Commons that a strong and earnest desire exists in India for any particular reform.

Very different is the case of (2) petitions relating to purely individual grievances for which redress is wanted. They are, no doubt, recorded, and they appear in the Reports of the Select Committee. But there is no machinery for enquiry into the grievances to which they refer; as a rule they pass unnoticed; and once presented they have no more value than waste paper. In an extreme case, it is true, in which an urgent remedy is required for a personal grievance of a flagrant kind, for which no redress is to be obtained in the Courts, a private petition may be publicly presented in the House of Commons. Even so its only utility consists in affording evidence or material for a subsequent discussion which in all probability will not take place. For it must be borne in mind that under the existing rules a private member can obtain only through the ballot an opportunity to bring forward a motion. If he is so fortunate as to get first place for a motion, he is sure to be pledged to use his opportunity for some great public question, or for some matter specially interesting his constituents. It is evident therefore that even the best friend of India could not afford to employ such an opportunity to draw attention to a case of private grievance. In practice therefore it is impossible that any action can be taken upon such a petition.

In view of the disappointment which is very frequently caused to petitioners in India through their misapprehension of the procedure relating to petitions, the following statement was drafted some time ago by the Chairman of the Select Committee on Petitions, and a copy of it is, we understand, regularly sent to Indian petitioners:—

> Petitions Department, Journal Office,
> House of Commons, ——— 18——
>
> Sir,—I am directed by the Chairman of the Select Committee on Public Petitions to acquaint you that your Petition was presented to the House of Commons on the——day of—— 18—, by———and has been duly recorded in the printed Report on Petitions.
>
> But I am also to inform you that Petitions to the House of Commons are regarded merely as a means of making known to the House the opinions of the Petitioners, or their wishes in reference to the matters to which the Petitions may refer. It is not the practice of the House to pass any decision on Petitions; and it is only because it is understood that the term "Petition" has a different meaning in India, that I am directed to send you this acknowledgment and explanation.—I have the honour to remain, Sir, your obedient Servant,
>
> ———*Petition Clerk.*

The point is, however, that this explanation reaches only those who have already incurred the trouble and cost of submitting petitions. What is desirable is, if possible, to prevent this disappointing waste of effort.

We trust that this explanation will be useful towards that end; and we shall be glad if our contemporaries in India will, by making a similar explanation in their columns, co-operate in discouraging a practice which leads at present to a very large amount of avoidable waste and vain hope.

Imperial Parliament.

Friday, March 17.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE BOUNTY-FED SUGAR BILL.
LIVELY QUESTIONS.

Mr. M'Kenna asked the Secretary of State for India whether the proposal of the Indian Government to impose countervailing import duties on bounty-fed sugar was made with a view to stimulating the Indian sugar-refining industry; and whether the bulk of coarse unrefined sugar now exported from India was refined in England.

Lord G. Hamilton: The hon. gentleman asks me what is the object of the Indian Government in proposing countervailing duties in India upon bounty-fed sugar. The object is to prevent a vast indigenous trade in India, based on free enterprise and industry, from being undermined by the subsidised products of foreign countries. (Hear, hear.) In reply to the second question, the average yearly export of unrefined sugar from India for the past three years was 45,000 tons a year, of which about three-quarters was consigned to the United Kingdom. I have not the precise information, but I understand that this Indian sugar is used in the United Kingdom partly by refineries, partly by breweries, and partly for fattening cattle.

Sir Henry Fowler: May I ask the noble lord whether he will postpone his decision as to allowing or disallowing any Act that may be passed by the Legislative Council with reference to countervailing duties until the papers, including the report of the debates in the Legislative Council, have been laid upon the Table of the House. (Opposition cheers.)

Lord G. Hamilton: All Bills after they have passed through the Legislative Council in India and have received the assent of the Viceroy become operative. They are then sent home to the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of State can, at any time afterwards, disallow them on a recommendation to the Crown, but it is not necessary for him to express approval. It has been the practice in the past to adopt that course, but of course if it be the wish of the right hon. gentleman and of others who take an interest in this matter that I should formally abstain from publicly expressing approval until a discussion in the House has taken place, I am quite ready to assent to that suggestion. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Courtney: Does the Bill itself specify the date at which it shall come into operation?

Lord G. Hamilton: It comes into operation on Monday. There is an exemption made in regard to sugar in transit.

Sir Henry Fowler: I assume that the noble lord will lay the papers on the Table.

Lord G. Hamilton: Yes. As soon as I get the Bill, if there is a wish in the House to discuss it, I will take care that any correspondence, as well as any papers relative to the subject in addition to the Bill and to the debates, shall be laid upon the Table of the House.

Mr. J. M. Maclean (who was received with cheers): I wish to ask the Secretary for India a question of which I have given him private notice, viz., whether he has seen the statement made yesterday by the Under-Secretary for the Colonies (Lord Selborne) with regard to countervailing duties on West Indian sugar, and whether he has remarked these words—"Assuming the expediency of countervailing duties, it was idle to contend that they had yet converted public opinion as a whole to their view, for many who supported the present Government would not accept the principle of countervailing duties. It was no good for them to live in a fool's paradise. (Opposition laughter and cheers.) They could not deal with the question unless they had public opinion entirely behind them." I ask the noble lord whether, in face of this declaration that the Colonial Office bows to public opinion in the matter, the noble lord still intends to persevere with the Indian Bill. (Loud Opposition cheers.)

Lord G. Hamilton: My hon. friend will notice that Lord Selborne's observations apply solely to the imposition of countervailing sugar duties in this country, but he did not say, as the question implies, that public opinion was against the imposition of countervailing duties in this country. All he said was that public opinion as a whole was not as yet on that side. (Opposition laughter and cheers.) In India, as my hon. friend is aware, the conditions surrounding the sugar trade are the reverse of those existing in this country.

Mr. Maclean: No, no. (Cries of "Order.")

Lord G. Hamilton: I am happy to be able to inform my hon. friend that in India, where countervailing duties are about to be imposed, public opinion is, I believe, unanimously in their favour. (Ministerial cheers and Opposition laughter.)

Mr. Maclean: I should like to ask the noble lord if he really assumes that India is governed without any regard to public opinion in this country. (Opposition cheers.)

The Speaker: Order, order. The hon. member is trying to raise a debate on the question.

Mr. Maclean: It is so difficult to raise a debate on the question. (Opposition cheers.)

Mr. J. B. Roberts: Is there any difference, except that the consumers are not represented in India, while they are here. (Cheers.)

The Speaker: Order. That is also entering into debate.

Sir W. Lawson: How does the noble lord arrive at public opinion in India? (Cheers.)

Lord G. Hamilton: I presume through usually recognised channels of public opinion. (Cheers and laughter.)

An Hon. Member: The Press. (Laughter.)

Monday, March 20.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE HEALTH OF BRITISH TROOPS.

Major Rasch asked the Secretary of State for India, whether his attention had been called to the fact that the returns for 1897 showed an increase of secondary syphilis of 8·5 in admission rate per 1,000, of mortality of ·17, of constantly sick of 1·18, as compared with the previous year; and that the number invalided home was 662 in 1897 as against 479 in 1896, being an increase of 183, or 38 per cent. of venereal disease:

Whether the information in the hands of the War Office showed that this increased virulence was due to the fact that patients did not undergo early treatment, but were removed from cantonments to spread disease elsewhere:

And, if it was the practice to treat men suffering from constitutional syphilis in barracks instead of in hospital, which caused an apparent reduction in the number of admissions and rendered the statistics misleading.

Lord G. Hamilton: The figures relating to venereal disease are correctly given by my honourable and gallant friend, but as regards admissions are applicable to troops in cantonments only.

The information available does not admit of any definite conclusion being drawn as to the cause of the increased virulence of secondary syphilis in 1897 as compared with 1896.

Treatment of soldiers in barracks, in certain stages of the disease, has doubtless caused some reduction in the admission rate, but as it has been practised for some years it does not I think affect the comparison of one year with another.

THE STUDY OF RUSSIAN AMONG INDIAN CIVILIANS.

Mr. Bill asked the Secretary of State for India, whether, having regard to the importance of a knowledge of Russian in the Indian Civil Service, he would cause that language to be added to the list as an optional subject for candidates in the open annual Civil Service competition.

Lord G. Hamilton: The subjects in which the open competition for the Indian Civil Service is held are chosen with the view of testing the general ability of the candidates, and their proficiency in the studies which usually form part of the higher education of this country. The candidates thus selected have to pass a subsequent examination in languages and other subjects which are likely to be specially useful for work in India; and, if a knowledge of Russian were made an optional subject, it would have to be added at this stage, and an extra language so added would tend to oust some other language more generally useful. The honourable member is probably aware that the study of Russian among Indian Civilians is encouraged by the grant of special facilities and privileges.

THE ACCOMMODATION OF LASCAR SEAMEN.

Mr. Havelock Wilson asked Mr. Attorney-General, whether any communications had passed between the Board of Trade and the Law Officers of the Crown, from August 9, 1898, to January 9, 1899, with regard to the state of the law as to the accommodation of Lascar seamen on board British registered vessels.

Sir R. Webster: No correspondence has passed between the Board of Trade and the Law Officers of the Crown from August 9th last to January 9th with regard to the state of the law as to the accommodation of Lascar seamen on board British registered vessels.

Mr. Havelock Wilson asked the Secretary of State for India, if he could state whether any communications passed between the Board of Trade and the India Office from August 9, 1898, up to and including January 9, 1899, with regard to the accommodation of Lascar seamen on British registered vessels.

Lord G. Hamilton: No written communication has passed on this subject, but on behalf of the Board of Trade enquiry was made orally. And after reference to the Government of India, I informed the Board that the matter remains under the present law, that is, under the Indian Merchant Shipping Acts of 1857 and 1876.

DUM-DUM BULLETS.

Mr. Dillon asked the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, whether he had any information as to the statement that Dum-dum bullets had been served out to Russian troops serving in the neighbourhood of the Indian frontier.

Mr. Brodrick: We have no information with regard to the statement.

THE BOUNTY-FED SUGAR ACT. ENGLAND AND INDIA.

Mr. M'Kenna asked the First Lord of the Treasury, whether he intended to introduce legislation for the purpose of imposing countervailing duties on bounty-fed sugar, in order to carry out the same policy in Great Britain and Ireland as had been declared to be that of the Government with regard to India, namely, to prevent a vast indigenous trade in Britain, based on enterprise and industry, from being undermined by the subsidised products of foreign countries.

Mr. Balfour: Without discussing the question of countervailing duties in this country, I would point out to the hon. gentleman that my noble friend, the Secretary for India, in his answer referred to the fact that there is in India a great indigenous production of sugar which under ordinary and natural conditions of trade might largely increase. As the hon. gentleman knows, there is no indigenous production of sugar in this country.

"BLOCKING" MOTIONS.

Mr. Maclean asked the First Lord of the Treasury, whether his attention had been drawn to the growing practice of blocking motions for the adjournment of the House to discuss definite matters of urgent public importance:

And, whether he would consider the expediency of leaving such motions to the absolute discretion of the Speaker and the House, with only such limitations on their authority as were already imposed by the terms of rule 17.

Mr. Balfour: In answer to my hon. friend, I have to say that no evidence has come before me that would induce me to believe that the practice of blocking motions of adjournment has increased. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. J. Lowther: May I ask the right hon. gentleman whether he remembers an episode when I myself put down a motion of the character?

The Speaker: Order, order. I think the right hon. gentleman should give notice of any specific question of that kind.

Mr. J. Lowther: I was only asking my right hon. friend whether he would refresh his memory.

Mr. Balfour: It has escaped my memory for the moment, but I will be glad to refresh it if my right hon. friend desires. (Laughter.)

Tuesday, March 21.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

INDIA AND THE IMPERIAL INSTITUTE.

Sir Mancherjee Bhownaggree asked the Secretary of State for India whether, in the contemplated transfer of a part of the Imperial Institute to another body, such portions thereof were included as had been heretofore devoted to the purposes for which money grants had been made by the Government of India, and also such other parts of the Institute as had been built at the expense of donations received from India; and, if so, would he state if any and what measures were being adopted to reserve the portions in question for the special purposes for which they were originally intended or set apart.

Lord G. Hamilton: In behalf of India, whence very liberal gifts were contributed to the Imperial Institute, I have taken steps to secure the objects contemplated in the hon. member's question. It

has been arranged that in the event of any transfer such as is suggested in the question, the Imperial Institute buildings now devoted to Indian purposes, and the parts of the buildings constructed from Indian contributions, shall be reserved for Indian objects. I shall be happy to give to my hon. friend, if he wishes it, a copy of a memorandum showing the arrangement that has been made.

MESSING CHARGES FOR OFFICERS.

General Russell asked the Secretary of State for India, whether he was aware that the messing on board ship for officers proceeding out to India on duty was formerly 2s. per diem, and for officers granted an indulgence passage 6s. 6d. per diem:

Would he explain why these charges had been raised to a uniform rate of 10s. per diem:

And, into whose pockets did the large profit go which must result from such a high charge.

Lord G. Hamilton: There has been no change in the messing charges for officers proceeding out to India on duty. The rate is 2s. a day for officers on duty, and 6s. 6d. for officers granted indulgence passages.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF LASCARS.

On the report of supply vote on account of £14,781,000 for the Civil Service and Revenue Departments,

Mr. Havelock Wilson moved to reduce the vote for the Board of Trade by £100 in order to call attention to the administration of the Merchant Shipping Act as to the employment of Lascars on British ships. Last August he was told that the matter was receiving the attention of the Board of Trade, and had been referred to the law officers, and as soon as the law had been ascertained it would be settled. But nothing had been done to enquire into the state of the law. The figures given by the President of the Board of Trade as to the number of men carried by P. and O. vessels did not correspond with the facts; indeed, he maintained that the company had deliberately misled the right hon. gentleman.

Mr. Ritchie, in the course of his reply, said that the Lascar question was now being considered by the Attorney-General and Solicitor-General, and if it turned out that in the opinion of those gentlemen the P. and O. Company or any other company was liable to penalties because of their action in respect to Lascars the Board of Trade would take action.

The House divided, and the numbers were—

For the reduction	31
Against	139
Majority	—108

Wednesday, March 22.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE INDIAN CURRENCY COMMITTEE.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

East India (Indian Currency Committee, 1898), Copy presented—of minutes of evidence taken before the Committee appointed to enquire into the Indian Currency, together with an analysis of the evidence, part II. [by command]; to lie upon the Table.

SLAVERY IN INDIA.

On the motion for the second reading of the Consolidated Fund (No. 1) Bill, Mr. Bayley called attention to the recognition by the Foreign Office of the legal *status* of slavery in East Africa. In the course of the debate the following references to India were made.

Mr. Brodrick: The hon. and learned gentleman (Sir R. T. Reid) says, "Why do we maintain slavery in Zanzibar or on the mainland of East Africa when we have abolished it in India long ago?" In the first place, the hon. and learned gentleman, I believe, is wholly in error in stating that we ever abolished slavery in India. The conditions in Zanzibar at this moment are legally infinitely more favourable to slaves than they have ever been in India, although Zanzibar is only a protectorate under the British Crown, while in India we are dealing with provinces directly under the British Crown. The Act of 1843, to which I suppose the hon. and learned gentleman refers, was certainly quoted by him with legal accuracy. That enactment forbids the selling or the buying of slaves.

Sir R. Reid: The language I quoted was taken from the section of the Indian Act of Parliament. I will get it if necessary.

Mr. Brodrick: I have not got the Indian Act here, but the hon. and learned gentleman will not deny that its provisions prohibit the selling and buying of slaves.

Sir Charles Dilke: The Under-Secretary, in defending the cause of the Foreign Office in this matter, has made one statement which will be received with great astonishment throughout India—namely, that slavery is worse in India than it is in Zanzibar.

Mr. Brodrick said what he had stated was this—that the position was better now in Zanzibar than it was in India in 1843, when legislation was passed which did not put the legal *status* of Mahometans in India on so good a basis as was that of the slaves in Zanzibar at present.

Sir. C. Dilke could not understand that, because in 1843 the legal *status* of slavery in India was abolished, and it remained abolished now; but it was now maintained in Zanzibar against the opinion of some of the highest African authorities in this country.

Mr. J. M. Maclean remarked that the statement made by the Under-Secretary suggesting that the *status* of domestic slavery in India had not been abolished would cause the utmost astonishment in that country. He ventured to say that if any official in India in the service of the Crown were to give an opinion, even in any court in India, that a man who had escaped from the *status* of domestic slavery might be returned to his master, that official would be summarily dismissed from the service of the Crown. (Cheers.) He thought they ought to have some contradiction of the suggestion, as it might be most dangerous. They had had some remarkable experiences in India lately, and it seemed now that, in addition to Protection, they were also to have the *status* of slavery restored. (Cheers and hear, hear.)

Mr. Brodrick said he was referring to the year 1843, and not to what was *de facto* the case in 1899.

Mr. Maclean: Does my right hon. friend admit that domestic slavery does not exist in India, and that it is not connived at?

Mr. Brodrick: I do not say it exists, and I really hope, and believe, it does not. No British official in India would think of returning a domestic slave to his master. But, as a matter of fact, I doubt whether by statute, at the time the law was altered, domestic slavery was abolished.

Mr. Maclean thought they might, at all events, admit that slavery was not going to be restored in India, but what they wanted to know was whether it was going to be continued on the mainland of Zanzibar. He thought they should assert the common law of England, which forbade slavery in any British protectorate. (Hear, hear.)

THE CALCUTTA MUNICIPAL BILL.

MEETING OF RATEPAYERS IN THE TOWN HALL.

INFLUENTIAL AND REPRESENTATIVE GATHERING.

THE POLICY OF THE BILL CONDEMNED.

REQUEST FOR POSTPONEMENT AND ENQUIRY.

[By Cable, from our own Correspondent.]

Calcutta, March 22.

A crowded public meeting, called by the Sheriff, was held in the Town Hall yesterday to consider the Calcutta Municipal Bill.

The requisition to the Sheriff was signed by the Mahárájá Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore, Mahárájá Sir Narendra Krishna, Mahárájá Durga Charan Law, Rájá Benoya Krishna, Sir Romesh Chunder Mitter, Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, and many other leading men.

Influential representatives of all classes—barristers, merchants, and tradesmen—attended. Mahárájá Sir Narendra Krishna, President of the British Indian Association, took the Chair.

Resolutions, moved, seconded and supported by ratepayers representative of the landed, commercial and professional clssses, were passed.

A Memorial to the Viceroy was adopted objecting to the policy and the provisions of the Bill, and praying for (1) the maintenance of local self-government, (2) the appointment of a representative Commission to enquire into the Municipal administration, and (3) the postponement of the Bill until the Report of the Commission be submitted.

Among the speakers were Rájá Peary Mohan Mukherjea, a well-known Zemindar, prominent members of the British Indian Association, Rájá Benoya Krishna, the Hon. Ananda Charlu, Hajee Noor Mohomet Zakaria (a leading and influential Mahometan) and other well-known and representative citizens.

Mahárájá Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore, who was unavoidably absent, sent a letter expressing his full sympathy with the objects of the meeting.

Great enthusiasm and excitement prevailed throughout.

The people of Calcutta expressed their gratitude in the matter to Lord George Hamilton, M.P., Sir Henry Fowler, M.P., Sir William Wedderburn, M.P., Mr. Herbert Roberts, M.P., Mr. W. S. Caine, and Mr. Romesh Dutt.—*By Indo-European Telegraph.*

PUBLIC MEETINGS ON INDIAN QUESTIONS.

THE WORK OF THE BRITISH COMMITTEE.

Sir William Wedderburn, M.P., has consented to deliver a further address at the Liberal Forwards' Club on "India in the House of Commons." This second address will deal with remedies for the defects to which Sir William in his former address called attention.

May 28 has now been fixed for Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji's address at the Westbourne Park Sunday Afternoon Conference.

On Monday last (March 20) Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal addressed a meeting of the Carlisle Women's Liberal Association. The *Carlisle Journal* (March 21) described the address as "extremely interesting."

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